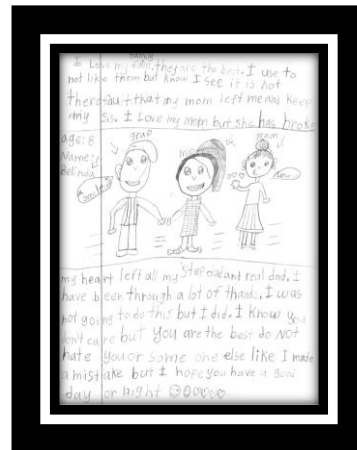


# My Family. My Story.

## 2020





# My Family. My Story. Art

## Contest 2020

Organized by  
IDHW Service Integration

*This booklet can be found online at*

**[211.idaho.gov](https://211.idaho.gov)**

## *My Family. My Story.*

Our best hope is for parents to love and care for their children and to raise them in a happy, healthy home.

However, family crisis sometimes requires children to be placed with relatives or other meaningful adults in their lives. This type of arrangement is commonly referred to as “kinship care.”

According to a national statistic from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1 in 11 children live with a relative or significant adult at some point before turning 18. In 2018 in Idaho, there were 10,574 grandparents responsible for their grandchildren younger than 18 years old. This does not account for the thousands of children living with relatives informally.

The My Family. My Story. Art Contest’s purpose has been twofold: to recognize the contributions of kinship care providers and to provide the children who participate an opportunity to feel connected with other children in similar situations. This year we expanded the contest to include expressions from kinship caregivers and additionally, community partners paying tribute to and honoring families they work alongside.

The following poems, essays, drawings and other works of art are the expressions of children and kinship caregivers who were placed in difficult circumstances yet have the resiliency to share their experiences with others.

We are also proud to highlight the inspirational expressions by community supporters in honor of Idaho’s kinship children and families.

***These are their families and their stories.***

# My Family. My Story.



## Table of Contents



Introduction	4
Entries	6 - 25
Special Thanks	26

## Winner~ Uneike Age 13

Imagine laying in a bed, feeling uncomfortable, scared even in your own house. At night when you go to bed is there something so terrible that is happening to you, sometimes you question if you wanna wake up the next morning. I have. I'm Uneike! I'm 13 years old. I live with my Aunt but now I call my Mom and her partner Irene.

Almost 3 years ago I was saved. "From what?" you might ask. Lots and lots, I've never once lived with any of my biological parents. For most of my life I lived with my grandmother. I didn't know someone could make the same mistake twice in a lifetime. Now I do, my grandma was ruined by drugs. Have you ever had to worry about someone passing out on the floor when you're gone. Or random stops in the car because the driver is falling asleep. Sometimes I would be terrified or confused, always alone and taking care of myself at the age of 10.

One day my Aunt called me and asked if I wanted to stay the night. I said "Yes" since I haven't seen her in over a year. Once that day was over she said I could come over whenever I wanted. I called the next weekend. When I went over I felt so sad knowing all the good times I missed with them. I told them everything that had happened since they left.

They were so heartbroken listening to everything I had to say. It wasn't until almost the end of explaining when I felt the most joy, love, and the safest I ever had in my life. It was unexplainable the best words I ever heard. They said "You're never going back." I just couldn't hold it in so I bursted into tears. I was so happy. There weren't enough words in the world that could help me explain how I felt.

Since then I've had a real family everything and anything that I could ever ask for. I've had all the love and support they made me feel like I've always been apart of this family.

In 3 years I've done so much, I learned to ride a bike at 12 years old. I've been to Disneyland, Universal Studios, and camping. I have so many memories, at concerts I've always had my family in the crowd cheering me on. One of my favorite memories Irene's mom invited me to breakfast one day and we talked and talked. That was the day she told me to call her grandma. To this day I still have a favorite McDonald's and a favorite spot to sit. I'm just starting 8<sup>th</sup> grade and I've gotten awards, I'm in AVID which is a college readiness program, I am a straight A student, and I play sports. This all wouldn't be possible without them. I think for anyone in the world it'd be the greatest honor and success to be apart of this family. Now that I have a family I couldn't live without them, not a single one of them. Here's some advice when you have a family cherish every moment with them before it's too late.





### Kincare guardians

Thank you for your Service.... yes, I call it that...what you do is a service!

Day in and day out, the love, care and guidance to your expanded family.

Every year is hard but this year, oh my.

When the kids did not return to school the challenges mounted.

The broken routine, three meals a day, and restrictions on maintaining friendships.

No internet in the home, no laptop or tablet, not knowing who or what to ask for.

It was hard for all families, but some families are generationally electronically challenged.

These families took on this challenge and persevered.

I have two teachers in my family and I was told; These were the families that answered the phone.

That attended appointments, that picked up and returned the school packets.

Bravo to You! You made lemonade from the lemon. A job well done kincare families.

~Barb

## Winner~ Hayden Age 14

### My Family, My Story



Before when I looked down, I would see,  
Brambles and thorns  
Tearing away at my feet.

Throughout life, you will find,  
We'll just sometimes close our minds.

But, do not trouble or be dismayed.

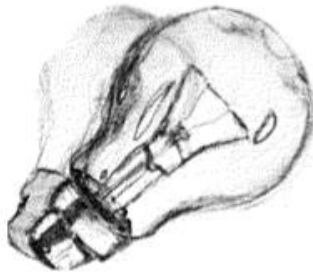
There are good days on the way.

When you look beyond the norm,  
You'll find you need not to conform.



They were there when I needed  
Them most. This is something that  
I will boast. That was before, and

This is now,  
That's my life, My story.



-Hayden

14 Yrs.



## Belinda Age 8

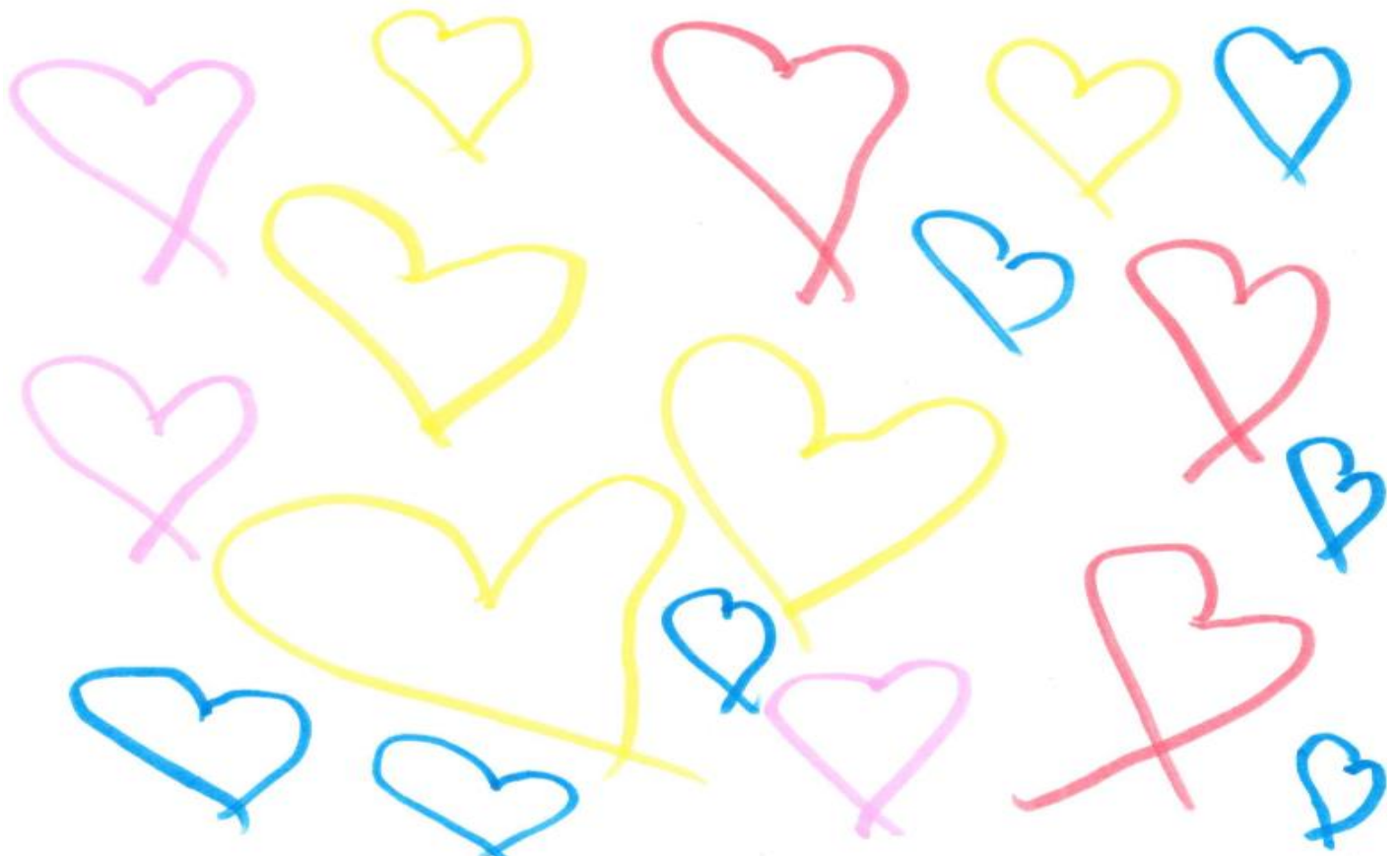
I Love my <sup>family</sup> fam. they are the best. I use to not like them but know I see it is not there fault. that my mom left me and keep my sis. I Love my mom but she has broke

age: 8  
Name: Belinda

my heart left all my Step dad and real dad. I have been through a lot of thanks. I was not going to do this but I did. I know you don't care but you are the best do NOT hate you or some one else like I made a mistake but I hope you have a good day or night ☺☺♥♥♥♥

**The Latin Proverb says, “From our ancestors comes our name but our virtues come honors”**

**Kinship families are the embodiment of unconditional love, the negatives outweigh the positives. They see the changes of stability and love and absolutely love them, they would walk to the end of the earth for their kids and the alternatives are the unthinkable. ~Lindsay**



## Akwa Age 17

For the past 8 years I have had the privilege to live with & be loved by Chad & Jennifer. Before they came into my life all I knew was the type of parents that did drugs and left days on end to get high. I didn't think I would be able to finish school but they made it possible. My father walked out awhile ago life went downhill from there. I didn't think I would be able to trust anyone ever again. I am now a Junior in high school & doing better than ever. I wish there was a way for me to pay them back. What I'm trying to say is without Chad I wouldn't know what fatherly love feels like. Thanks to Chad & Jennifer I am not scared to open my heart to people.

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Families,

It is an honor to be a part of an agency that walks beside kinship families in their journey to support our community's children. It might not have been what they were envisioning, but it is amazing to see the positive impact they have on children.

Forever Grateful,

Sara



Sammie Age 9

I live in Mountain Home, Idaho and I like it here because My aunt and uncle love me, they don't make me live in an ugly room, (unlike the last room I had) they don't make me do stuff I don't want to do, (Sometimes they get me lots of stuff, and clothes. And we don't live in an ugly house with a million bugs in it. I love them!)

My aunt takes me to horse lessons where my other aunt (which is her sister) does the lessons. She has three horses. Guny, Beamer, and Black Betty. I ride Gun a fast (famous) horse, and Beamer is the one that other people ride. Betty is only one, so she is too young. I love horse lessons!

I Love.....  
 Everything in Idaho  
 By: Sammie A.



Forest E. Witcraft TEACHER, SCHOLAR

“A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”



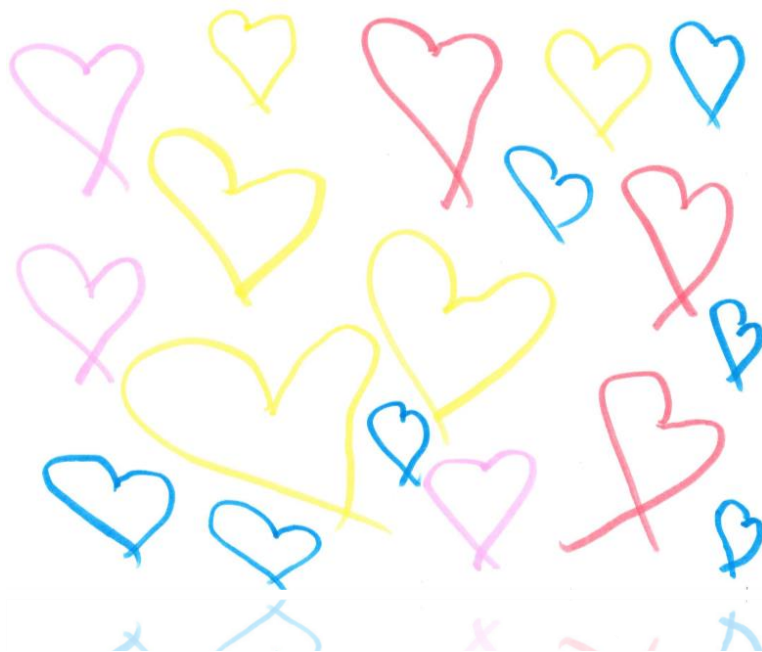


## Alexis Age 15

Hi my name is Alexis . I am 15 year old and I have been living with my grandma for 10 years now. I don't remember much when I was 5 years old but I do remember is my mom on the floor and my Dad was on top of my mom and he was hitting her and since that day life has been kinda of a struggle but I've been trying to find ways to get by, me and my brother we've have managed to stay by each other and we were always there for each other. The thing that effected me the most was my mom said she'll be back in two weeks and never come back. So for me and my brother have accomplish so many goals in our life with my brother he's barely starting college and me barely starting highschool since the start of 2020 it's been a wild journey watching my peers accomplish big goals in there my brother starting college my uncle buying one of his dream cars and my grandparents finishing pay there house and it's my turn accomplish my goals and go on my own journey.

*I am in awe of the kinship families I  
work with. These families show  
boundless love, open hearts and prevail  
despite challenge and the unknown.  
You inspire me, thank you for all you  
do!*

*~Heidi*





Devin Age: unknown

My name is Devin and I don't know any story that's better for this than my own. I was living in Las Vegas with my mom and step-dad. He was extremely abusive and it was bad. He got so bad at one point that I was beat on a daily. Finally I was sent away by my mom because she chose him over me. I was sent to my father in Washington. It was only 6 months before I was sent to my Grandmas and Grandpas. It was apparently because "I was too much for him", but he's never really been a part of my life ever since I've been with them. I haven't been hit, or put down since. I've been able to turn my life around completely. I've been given the second chance in life I needed to grow and become who I am today and I can't possibly thank my grandmother and grandfather enough. Thank you for giving me the chance to get my story put. One thing that I've learned is "it always gets harder before it gets easier."

Sincerely,

Devin.

spending time  
together

What it's like living with  
my grandma and grandpa it  
has been cool. Sometimes  
we played board games. We  
picked raspberries. We  
ate tacos burgers and  
steak spaghetti corn on  
the cob and watermelon.  
We went to fun places  
and took a bunch of  
photos and made it  
into a blanket. Some  
days we took walks  
and sat and talked  
and ate lunch  
together. I like having  
a bed! We did work.  
We danced in the  
kitchen.

Jet Age 8

## Winner~Jet Age 8

### Spending time together

What it's like living with my grandma and grandpa it has been cool. Sometimes we played board games, we picked raspberries. We ate taco burgers, steak spaghetti corn on the cob and watermelon. We went to fun places and took a bunch of photos and made it into a blanket. Some days we took walks and sat and talked and ate lunch together. I like having a bed! We did work. We danced in the kitchen.

## Karlee Age 14

Karlee  
9-10.

My life before and after...  
When I was a baby my birth mom just wanted to party. She was very young and didn't care about taking care of me. My grandma stepped in and we moved away. Since then I've called her mom, she has done everything for me. Feeding me, teaching me new things and took good care of me. We haven't had any problems with having to worry about food, a dirty home or drugs/drinking. When I was 10 almost 11 I went back to my birth mom's place. Nothing changed with her, always parties, drugs, beer and not enough food. We were always broke because she blew it on her or her drugs and beer. We always had a dirty home and cops came in and out a lot. I had to babysit a lot too. She had 3 other kids I'd watch a lot and sometimes from 6am to 7 maybe 8 at night. At the time I had to

watch a baby that just turned 1 and we never had someone help us or even check on us. Sometimes she would come home and then take off and go buy more drugs from her friends. Life there was a living nightmare. That was really hard and I basically had to be the mother there. Feed them, bath them, watch them and take care of them. Finally after 1 year she brought me home. When I came home I had forgot what it was like living a normal life. I never had to worry about food, a dirty home or anything like that. Now I'm back to having a good clean home, no cops bang over all the time and no drinking or drugs. So thanks to my mom (grandma) I don't have to be a mom to 3 kids. We have a good running car and home, etc. This is my home and kind of life I'm use to.





## Region 3 Navigation

## Anna~ kinship grandma

"ELYIZ A BOY WHO  
HAD THE WILL TO LIVE"

ELYIZ WAS A PREMEE WHO WAS BORN  
AT 27 WEEKS.

HE WAS VERY TINY, COULD FIT IN THE  
PALM OF GRANDPA'S HAND.

GRANDPA PRAYED FOR HIM, AS HE  
THRIVED TO COME INTO THIS WORLD.

AS HE GREW, HE BECAME VERY ENTERGETIC.

ENJOYS BEING OUTSIDE, DELIGHTS GOING  
TO THE PARK, AND HAS FUN LOOKING FOR BUGS  
SUCH AS ROLLY POLLYS.

AS I HOLLAR TO HIM TO SHUT OFF THE WATER,  
HE TELLS ME, "I AM PLAYING IN THE MUD"  
WHICH IS HIS FANCY.

HIS ENJOYMENT IS FOR ME TO TICKLE HIM  
ALL OVER, WHICH I GET PLEASURE OUT OF, BECAUSE  
HE LAUGHS SO HEARTILY WITH GLEE. AND ONE  
CAN SEE A BEAUTIFUL SMILE FROM EAR TO EAR.

ELYIZ IS MY 6-YR-OLD GRANDSON

X - XYLOPHONE

Z - ZESTFUL

A - ADORABLE

V - VALIANT

I - IDENTICAL

E - EASYGOING

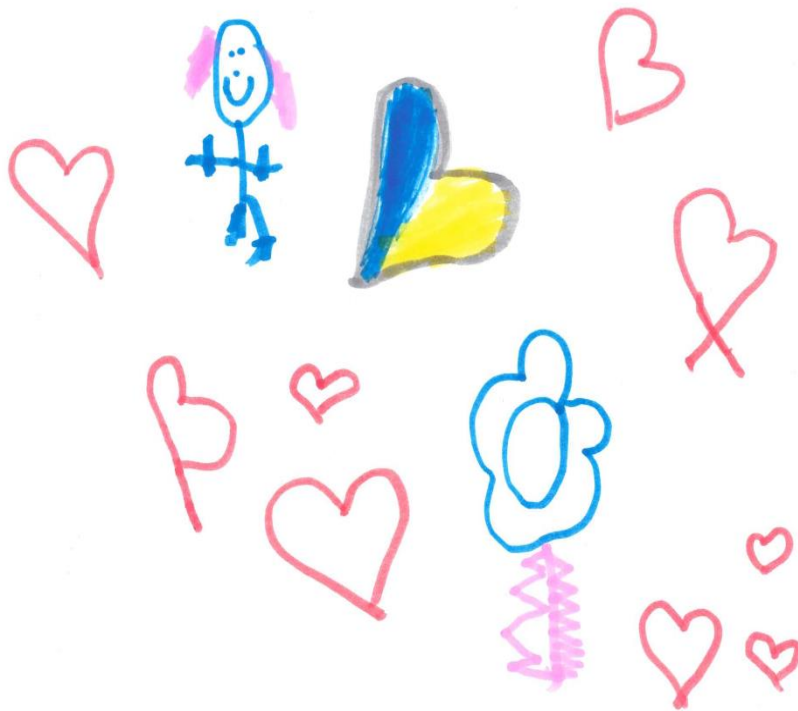
N - NATURAL

IS MY 5-YR-OLD GRANDSON

Casey Foundation, 1 in 11 children live with a relative or significant adult at some point before turning 18.

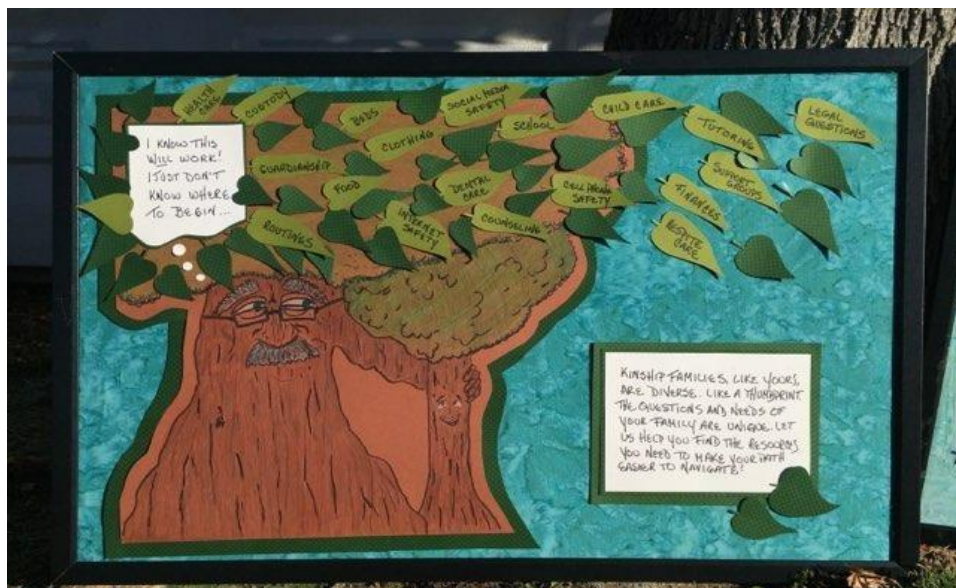
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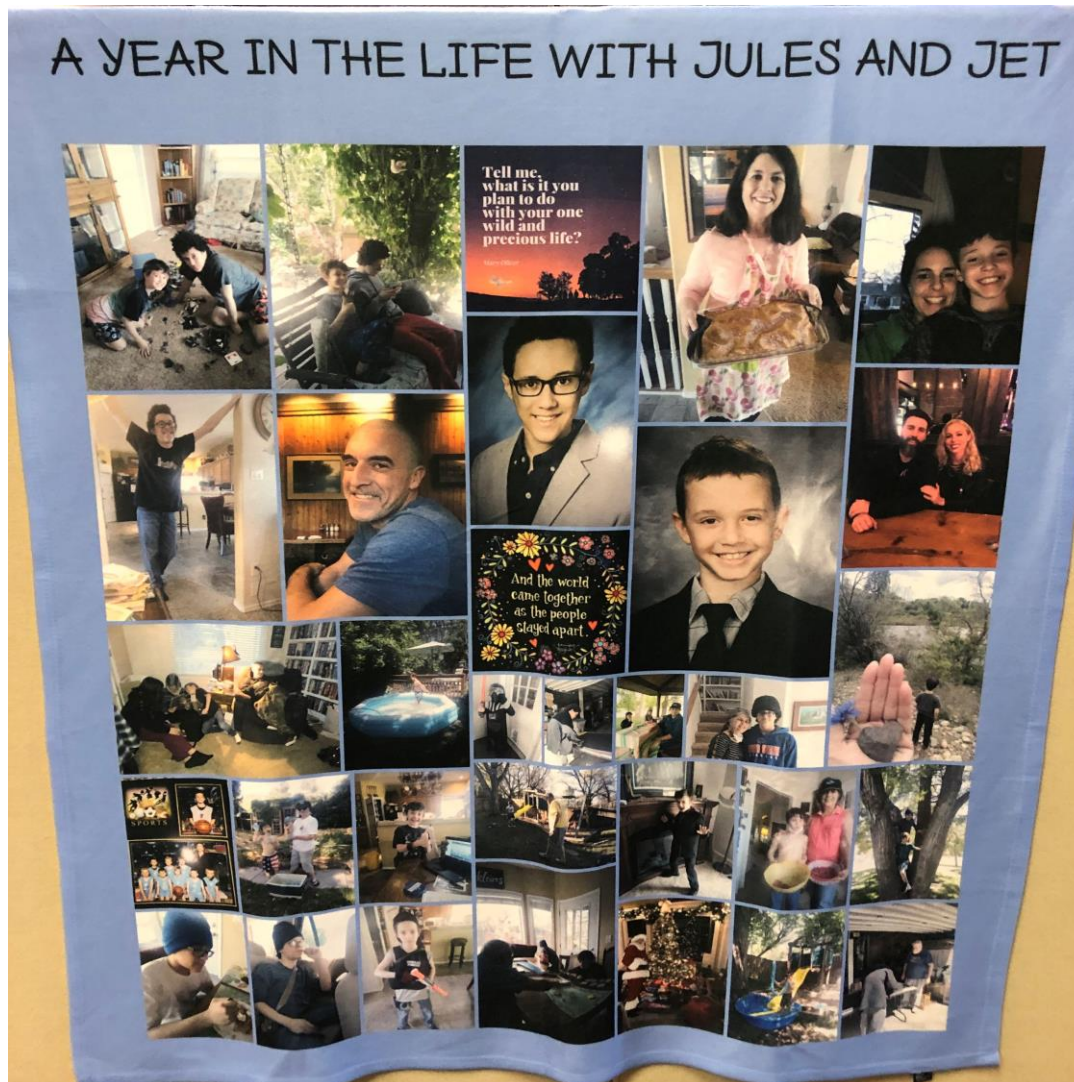




## Region 4 Navigation



## Winner Suzanne~ kinship grandma



They say that "a picture is worth a thousand words" Henrik Ebsen I believe that "a picture shows a story of love, growth, fun, work- all things that make life a blessing. Even amidst a pandemic we can still shine. " - Suzanne



## Winner~ Linda ~ Community Supporter

Hello!

This writing is being submitted because I feel Aurora deserves recognition from the kinship community for her role in stepping up to care for a non-biological child.

Aurora and I met when I was contacted to assist her with guardianship paperwork for an infant. The child was the son of a friend of hers. Not a relative but a friend. Without hesitation Aurora said yes.

This young lady is still almost a child herself. She was a mere 21 years of age when we met in person and had experienced more trauma in her short life than most of us experience in our entire lives. Since I am the one writing this I am not going into all the details, however, her childhood was less than ideal and she had just lost her fiancée to a horrible car accident August 24 of 2019. We met in May of 2020.

This amazing young woman has taken a child into her home and heart as if she gave birth to him. During my many years as a kinship provider I have developed a sense of people. This young woman almost instantly impressed me. Her great outlook, plans for the future, capacity to forgive, willingness to help others and strength in the face of great adversity and sorrow are all wonderful qualities that usually come later in life. She has them all.

The other thing that immensely impressed me was the infant in her care. He was just a little over a month old when we met. Aurora has had him since birth. He was the perfect picture of a well-loved, exceptionally well cared for child. All the little, often missed, signs of a happy, healthy, thriving child were there.

These are the reasons I would like to see Aurora recognized for her love and care of this young boy. She deserves acknowledgement for what she is doing. Far too often kinship care givers do not get that recognition. They all deserve it. I picked Aurora because she needs people in her corner who know what an amazing thing she is doing.

**Thank you for your  
participation, support and  
expressions honoring  
Idaho's kinship families.**

***\*Special thanks to Caly Klein for special quotes  
artwork.***

